A3 Problem Solving | ESA Strategic Objective 1.1 Increase the Percentage of People Participating in the Basic Food Program

Lean!

David Stillman, Assistant Secretary
Economic Services Administration / June 2014
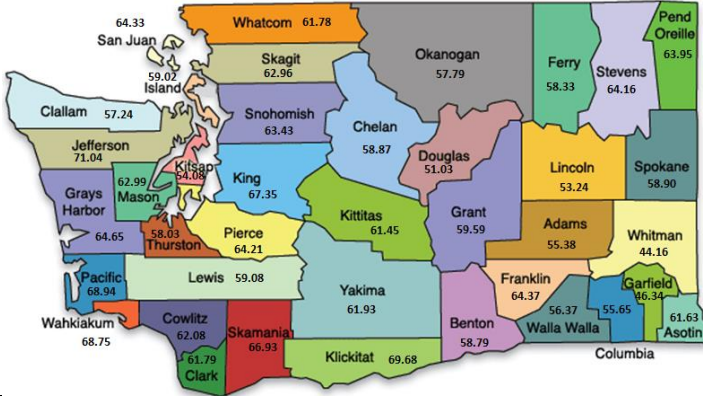
Clarify the Problem

In nearly 70 percent of Washington counties (27 of 39), more than 13 percent of the population lives in poverty, and eight counties have a poverty rate of 20 percent or more (2011 US Census Bureau estimates). Providing food assistance is critical to support these low-income individuals and families.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known as Basic Food (BF) in Washington, is the first line of defense against hunger. Low income individuals and families need SNAP as income support to help them meet their nutritional needs.

While Washington's Basic Food Program participation rate (93%) is among the highest in the nation, nearly 88,000 Washington State residents are income eligible but not participating in Basic Food Assistance.

Breakdown the Problem

Percentage of clients who are receiving Medicare Subsidy Plan (MSP) assistance not also receiving BF. Clients who are income eligible for MSP are income eligible for BF.

	March 2014			April 2014		
	ACS 125% Poverty Count 2012[2]	# of Clients[1]	% of People Below 125% Poverty Level[3]	ACS 125% Poverty Count 2012[2]	# of Clients[1]	% of People Below 125% Poverty Level[3]
Region 1	339,900	316,734	93.2%	339,900	315,301	92.8%
Region 2	468,585	387,498	82.7%	468,585	384,763	82.1%
Region 3	375,771	385,211	102.5%	375,771	382,786	101.9%
Statewide Total	1,184,256	1,089,443	92.0%	1,184,256	1,082,850	91.4%

1. Clients are active recipients who live in a Washington State County.
2. Total number of people with income below 125 % of poverty for counties with a population greater than 65,000 is published by Bureau of Census, American Community Survey (ACS) for 2012. Small county estimates were extrapolated from the 2011 5-year ACS estimates.
3. Percentage =divide total BF participants by the estimated number of people living below 125% of the official poverty line for 2012. ACS poverty data for 2013 is available in September 2014.
Percentages more than 100% are the result of differences in reporting time periods between the most recent ACS data and the most recent BF client data This data is used to align with the data used by the Federal Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

The table to the left shows the same as the numbers on the map and is provided for clarity

County	%	County	%	County	%	County	%	County	%	County	%	County	%
Adams	55.38	Clark	61.79	Franklin	64.37	Jefferson	71.04	Lewis	59.08	Pend Oreille	93.95	Snohomish	64.43	Walla Walla	56.37
Asotin	61.63	Columbia	55.65	Garfield	46.34	King	67.35	Lincoln	53.24	Pierce	64.21	Spokane	58.9	Whatcom	61.78
Benton	58.79	Cowlitz	62.08	Grant	59.59	Kitsap	54.08	Mason	62.99	San Juan	64.33	Stevens	64.16	Whitman	44.16
Chelan	58.87	Douglas	51.03	Grays Harbor	64.65	Kittitas	61.45	Okanogan	57.79	Skagit	62.96	Thurston	58.03	Yakima	61.93
Clallam	57.24	Ferry	58.33	Island	59.02	Klickitat	69.68	Pacific	68.94	Skamania	66.93	Wahkiakum	68.75		

Target Setting

Increase the percentage of eligible people participating in the Basic Food program from 93 percent in July 2013 to 96 percent by July 2015.

*Based on the population within 125% of the Federal Poverty guidelines used by the most current American Community Survey (ACS) data produced by the US Census Bureau compared with monthly SNAP participation in the state of Washington. Due to the release dates of ACS data, the official participation rates for each year are available after October of the following year.

Identify Root Cause

Lack of Information about the program	Process	Access	Prior Experience with DSHS	*Not Enough FS	* Principles/ Embarrassed / Issue with Government
Never had the program explained to them	Apply, but are denied for failing to show for interview or providing verification	Can't get to the office to apply	The CSO is not a pleasant place to visit	Don't think the benefit is worth the effort to get it	Do not want to be seen with EBT card
Not sure if they qualify	Don't have the documents they need	Live in remote area	Had a bad experience and do not want to have another	Too much hassle for the minimum amount	Political / social objection to FS program
Think getting FS will impact their eligibility for citizenship	Have to wait too long for to be interviewed	No PC to apply No phone to apply	Annoying kids in the lobby		Do not want people to know
I have a job so I can't get FS	Pain to apply: • Long application • Have to go to CSO • Wait for interview	Can't speak English	Have to share too much personal information – concerned that information will not be protected		Someone else needs it more than me.
My roommate already gets FS so I can't get FS too		Don't have transportation to office or store			If I get FS then someone more deserving will lose out on benefits
I get food at the food bank so I can't get FS too					
I'm not a citizen so I can't get FS					
Know about the FS program but don't think they are eligible					
Don't know about the FS programs					
FS are for the poor					
In treatment center					

*included in the brainstorming, but not included in the groups considered for countermeasures.

Identify Countermeasures

Root Cause	Proposed Countermeasure	Feasibility	Cost	Risk	Impact
Lack of Information about the process	Develop new brochures for outreach (regarding employment, citizenship, application process, undocumented parents of citizen children, and what you can get for $15.00), target audience is seniors, food banks, treatment centers and Hispanic populations. Update "Things to know about Food Stamps". Outreach to underserved households	High	Low/Medium	Low	Medium
Lack of Information about the process	Update "Things to know about Food Stamps" and food help website to be more relevant	High	Low/Medium	Low	Medium
Lack of Information about the process	Update school themed brochure delivered by Office Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Include Link between SNAP & school meals. Get information on Washington Connection access at schools.	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Process	Have outreach contractor/ Washington Connection Partner summit to develop strategies and share best practices. Continue to work with BF outreach contractors to improve access and participation	Low	High	Medium/High	Medium/High
Process	Create statewide social marketing campaign	Low	High	High	Medium/Low
Process	Change payment points for outreach to disseminate more information	High	Low	Low	Medium
Not enough FS	Develop toolkit for mobile Community Services Office (CSO) and BF contractors to show what $15.00 buys	High	Low	Low	Medium
Access	Target schools, senior gathering places/homes, homeless shelters with more information about BF program and how to access.	High	Low	Low/medium	Medium/Low
Process	Conduct SNAP education demonstrations in the CSO to inform clients during the wait	High	Low	Low	Medium
Process	Use data and focus groups to learn why people don't complete Reviews, Recertification, application.	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Process	Simplify application	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Access	Coordinate with community groups to provide transportation for the needy to the office	Medium	Low	High	High
Access	Use mobile CSO for planned events for seniors and ethnic populations	High	Low	Low	Medium
Access	Publish a list of community partners and contractors people can contact for assistance	High	Low	Medium	Medium
Lack of Information about the process	Create a MythBuster type flyer/ handout to rebrand DSHS service. Can include application process, timeframes, call center, online application.	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Prior Experience with DSHS	Create marketing with an emphasis on not needing to come into the office, and if you do, what to expect with the new CSO set up	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Process	Create SNAP education funded coloring books and crayons for the CSO lobbies	High	Low	Medium/Low	Low

Action Plan

ID#	Problem to be solved	Action Item	Lead	Due Date	Status
3.1	Access	Work with community groups to coordinate transportation for the needy to the CSO	V. Baxter	9/2014	
3.2	Access	Use mobile CSO for planned events for seniors and ethnic populations	V. Baxter	9/2014	
3.3	Access	Publish a list of community partners and contractors people can contact for assistance	V. Baxter	10/2014	
1.6	Lack of Information about the process	Develop toolkit for mobile CSO and BF contractors to show what $15.00 buys	V. Baxter	9/2014	
1.7	Lack of Information about the process	Change payment points for outreach to disseminate more information. Continue to work with BF outreach contractors to improve access and participation	V. Baxter	11/2014	
2.1	Lack of Information about the process	Conduct SNAP education demonstrations in the CSO to inform clients while they are waiting	V. Baxter	10/2014	
4.1,4.1.1	Lack of Information about the process	Create marketing with an emphasis on not needing to come into the CSO, and if you do, what to expect with the new CSO. Create flyer/ handout to rebrand BF service. Include application process, timeframes, call center, online application.	J. Camp	10/2014	
2.3	Lack of Information about the process	Use data and focus groups to learn why people don't complete Reviews, Recertification, application.	J.Camp	12/2014	
1.8	Access	Target schools, senior gathering places/homes, homeless shelters to provide more information about BF program and how to access. Target underserved populations	H. St John	10/2014	
1.1, 1.1.1.	Lack of Information about the process	Develop new brochures for outreach (regarding employment, citizenship, application process, undocumented parents of citizen children, and what you can get for $15.00), target audience is seniors, food banks, treatment centers and Hispanic populations. Update "Things to know about Food Stamps". Outreach to underserved households	H. St John	11/2014	

Evaluate Results,   Standardize, then Repeat